

PERSONAL-SOCIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VARSITY
ATHLETES AND NON-VARSITY ATHLETES AT
GRAMBLING LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL

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by

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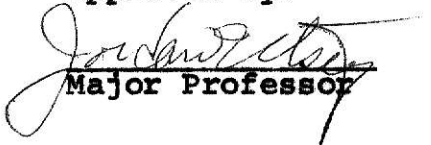
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.	1
The Problem	3
Statement	3
Hypothesis.	3
Procedure	3
Definition of Terms	5
Delimitations	6
II. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH.	7
Summary	13
III. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS	15
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	18
BIBLIOGRAPHY	21

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
TABLE 1. Differences between the Means of Athletes and Non-athletes in Personal Adjustment	16
TABLE 2. Differences between the Means of Athletes and Non-athletes in Social Adjustment	17

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The contention that participation in interscholastic athletics may affect favorable changes in the personalities of the participants has been frequently made. In previous years these changes in personality development were referred to as the formation of character. More recently, the scope of the changes in personality attributed to an individual's participation in athletics has been expanded to include claims of improvement in the social adjustment of the participants and in the development of desirable human relations.

Typical of studies which claim that extensive benefits are an outgrowth of athletic competition is one by Anderson (1969) who compared personal adjustment and social status measures of non-participants and athletic groups of boys ten to fifteen years of age. Anderson (1969) contended that the intense and challenging situation in athletic competition provides the youth with socially acceptable channels through which he may express his aggressive tendencies and expend his excess energy. Opportunities in which he may control many of his antisocial tendencies through sublimation and in which he may compensate for real or imaginable inadequacies are abundant. In athletics, he can express his emotions vigorously in a socially acceptable manner.

Although these broad claims of the values of interscho-

lastic athletics have not been accepted as valid by many people, considerable debate has resulted. A controversy has risen over the professed values of athletic programs. The athletic coaches have argued that athletics contribute to the highest ideals of American culture. On the other hand, some opponents have countered with a charge that the present form of participation in athletics results in the development of traits which are detrimental to the individual and to society.

Although the evidence is not conclusive, many counselors, coaches, and educators believe that athletic participation can help teach the value of cooperation as well as other desirable habits of conduct. Athletes who participate in regularly scheduled interscholastic athletic programs are said to exhibit characteristic behaviors in common social situations which differ from those of non-participants in such activities. While there is a paucity of evidence to indicate that some differences do exist, the trend of these personality differences are not clear as reported by Biddulph (1954:1-7), Booth (1957), and France (1953).

In order to widen the negligible amount of research pertaining to personal-social adjustment of high school athletes, an investigation was conducted comparing the psychological characteristics of athletes and non-athletes in high school. This study should be of value to counselors, coaches, and physical educators to know whether or not there is a significant relationship between personal adjustment and social adjustment of high school athletes and non-athletes.